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BOOK REVIEW

REBUTTAL OF FALSE AND WILD ALLEGATIONS AGAINST ISLAM AND THE HOLY PROPHET MUḤAMMAD (S.A.W.)

Purnell's Concise Encyclopaedia about history, which is said to be in circulation in Pakistan and other Muslim countries, contains several derogatory remarks against Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and mis-represents Islamic teachings in a number of ways.

An attempt has been made in the ensuing pages to pin-point these glaring mis-representations and allegations against Islam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and refute them in the light of actual facts and correct historical perspective. It will be appreciated if misinformed persons in the West as well as the author and publisher of Purnell's Encyclopaedia read this Note carefully so that the distortions contained in this Encyclopaedia are not repeated in its future edition.

ALLEGATION 1. *Most historians agree that the child (Muhammad) was an epileptic, sad and introverted.*

ANS. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) in his childhood was blessed with good health and suffered from no disease either in his childhood or in his youth. It is absolutely absurd to claim that he suffered from epileptic fits, because a person suffering from such fits becomes mentally weak, but the holy Prophet (S.A.W.) showed no signs of mental weakness till the end of his life.

ALLEGATION 2. *Muhammad was interested in religious ideas and influenced by a group known as Hanifites (devoted or dedicated). These men taught the idea of complete submission to the will of the One God, Allah, rejecting all idol worship and living simply and meditating. In* 610 *A.D. Muhammad went with his wife to a cave at Mount Hira to meditate. Here he saw vision and went into states of religious ecstasy. Later, he declared that the Angel Gabriel had appeared to him and told him that he was now the one true Prophet of God.*

ANS. In preaching monotheism Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) was not influenced in any manner by the group of people known as Ḥanifs who had the most rudimentary conception of monotheism, while the monotheism preached by the Prophet of Islam was a full-fledged doctrine delineating all the attributes of God, His Supreme Power and Absolute Sovereignty.

It is not correct that Muhammad (S.A.W.) went with his wife to the cave of Hira for meditation. As recorded by his biographers, the Holy Prophet, after his marriage with Khadija, usually retired to the mountains near Makkah and there he meditated on the wonders of the universe and the mystery of creation. No one accompanied him in these meditations, not even his wife. He meditated in complete solitude and it was during one of his meditations in the Cave of Hira that the Angel Gabriel appeared before him with the Divine message *Iqra* ' Read.' This was his first revelation. Thereafter, he continued to receive one revelation after another with a brief break, and began to preach Islam to his people, beginning with the members of his family and tribe.

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ALLEGATION 3. *Muhammad often went into states of ecstasy and claimed further revelations. These were collected and became the Muslim Holy Book, the Qur'an.*

ANS. The word "ecstasy" used for describing the Holy Prophet's mental state at the time of revelation is inappropriate. Those who saw him at the time when he received a revelation say that he perspired profuselly and he himself said that he had a feeling that at the time of revelation his limbs became heavy. Any how, words can not describe his state of mind at the time of revelation.

After this super-normal state of mind had passed, he dictated the revealed words of God to a scribe. But his revelations were not arranged in the form of a book during his life time. They were written on separate sheets of paper or on bones and were collected and arranged in the book form after his death. Some of his Companions memorised separate Chapters of the Qur'an which was helpful in making it certain that the Qur'an, as it was written down, was exactly the same as it was revealed to the Holy Prophet. Thus the Holy Qur'an became the most authentic book in the history of religious scriptures.

ALLEGATION 4. *The people of Makkah finally beseiged Muhammad in the house of a rich patron, hoping to starve him to death because they dared not actually shed blood in the Holy City. Muhammad evaded them by claiming that a revelation had shown him that the various goddesses of Makkah were also worthy of reverence. Once free he recanted, saying that this revelation was from the Evil One.*

ANS. This passage betrays the complete ignorance of the writer about the facts of the Holy Prophet's life. Muhammad (S.A.W.) was besieged in his house (not in the house of a patron) years after his alleged declaration that the goddesse of Makkah were also worthy of reverence. And they besieged him not with the intention of starving him but in order to assassinate him, so that he might not migrate to Medina, where a sizeable number of his Makkan converts had taken refuge, after Islam had spread in Medina. The polytheists were afraid that if the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) escaped to Medina, this city would become a stronghold of Muslim resistance.

The alleged declaration of Muhammad (S.A.W.) that the goddesses of Makkah were also worthy of reverence is part of a story which many historians regard as being completely unfounded and the incident took place many years before the Prophet formed any idea of migrating to Medina, because till that time hardly a single citizen of Medina had been converted to Islam. As the story goes, once the Prophet was reciting a few verses of the Holy Qur'an in the Ka'ba (the mosque of Makkah which was considered sacred even by the Polytheists). When the Prophet came to the verse, " And another, the third (goddess) Manāt " (Surah Najm-20) some of the Polytheists who were hearing him, cried out saying, "These are the female deities whose intercession is to be sought for." The people thought that the Holy Prophet had uttered these words and so the news spread. But the Prophet at once denied that he had recited any verse mentioning that the intercession of the female goddesses of the polytheists should be sought for. It may be mentioned here that it was the usual practice of the Polytheists that when the Prophet read out his revelations in the Ka'ba (Holy mosque of Makkah), the Polytheists made noises to devert the attention of the people who were present in the mosque. This fact

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has been mentioned by the Holy Qur'an. Muhammad Abduh, the famous Egyptian scholar, claims that the word Charāniq used for the female goddesses in the verse attributed to the Prophet has never been used in Arabic poetry and literature in this sense. Whenever this word (Charāniq) is used in Arabic, it means a water bird. All this shows that the story of the Holy Prophet saying that the intercession of the female goddesses is to be sought for is incorrect and an invention of the people called Zanādiqa (Atheists).

ALLEGATION 5. *Muhammad and his followers believed they had Allah's authority to spread Islam and to execute those who did not believe.*

ANS. This allegation also betrays complete ignorance of Islamic teachings. The Qur'an has made it quite clear that there is no compulsion in religion (2 : 256). In fact, the Holy Qur'an has commanded Muslims to be kind and just to those non-Muslims who do not fight them for the sake of religion. "God forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for your faith nor drive you out of your homes from dealing kindly and justly with them." (60 : 8)

If Muslims believed that Allah had ordered them to execute non-Muslims, there would be no non-Muslim in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent which was ruled by the Muslims for more than five hundred years and which is inhabited by a large majority of non-Muslims. Far from executing non-Muslims, Muslims were so tolerant of other religions that Jews fled from Christian countries and sought refuge from Christian persecution in the Middle Ages in the countries ruled by Muslim monarchs. If Muslims had executed non-Muslims, Spain and France today would have been Muslim countries, for Spain was ruled by Muslims for seven centuries from where they reached the outskirts of France.

ALLEGATION 6. *Pages of the Koran, the sacred book of Islam, which is said to be the actual word of God passed on through the Prophet Muhammad.*

ANS. The photograph of the pages of Holy Qur'an shown in the Encyclopaedia are upside down. It seems that the " learned " author does not know even the arrangement as to how to handle such a Book. He seems to have no knowledge of the alphabets of the Arabic language so that he could have taken the photograph of the pages of the Holy Qur'an in its proper shape. Such is the standard of the scholarship of the writer of this article !

ALLEGATION 7. *This retreat or fligh is of great importance to Muslims ; it is called the Hegira and took place on 22nd September, 622. It is from this time that the Muslim year is now reckoned, i.e. 622 A.D. AH'l.*

ANS. It is not correct to call the migration of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) from Makkah to Medina as retreat or flight. The correct word for it is *Hijrah* or migration which was made by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) at the command of the Almighty Allah.

ALLEGATION 8. *From a visionary and preacher, Muhammad became a soldier, statesman, law-maker and virtually a king. He was soon claiming Allah's authority for using force in spreading the new creed, and for the execution of all unbelievers.*

ANS. Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) was never a visionary but a man of practical accomplishments who, although the Head of a State, led a very simple and austere life which is

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even now a shining example for all to emulate in order to achieve success in this world and the Hereafter.

Force was used only when it became absolutely essential i.e. when the frontiers of the newly founded Islamic state were threatened by hostile powers who were bent upon eradicating Islam from its cradle. It was then that the Muslims used the sword in self-defence and taught a lesson to the aggressors. After the Holy Prophet's emigration to Medina, the Qureish of Makkah constantly planned to the destroy the power of the newly established Islamic state of Medina. This led to many battles in which Muslims were never the aggressors.

Islam stands for peace and good neighbourly relations with other peoples and nations and upholds the protection of the life and property of its non-Muslim citizens. The allegation that Muhammad (S.A.W.) was charged with Allah's authority for using force in spreading Islam and for the execution of all unbelievers is absolutely without any foundation and comes as a rude shock to the Muslims.

The allegation that Muhammad (S.A.W.) became virtually a king is totally false. Although the Holy Prophet had all the resources of Arabia at his command during the last years of his life, he lived like a poor man in a house built of mud and clay and, according to the statement of his wife, Ayesha, very few days passed in every month of the year when fire was ignited in his house for cooking food. For the greater part of the year, he and his family lived on dates. Whatever money or gifts came to him, he distributed it among the indigent and he died without leaving any property or household effects except a coat of armour. Once an old woman met him in the street and, taking hold of his finger, made him wander through the streets of Medina for performing some private work of hers. Such was the state of his royalty.

ALLEGATION 9. *He (Muhammad) sanctioned polygamy, but abolished the practice of Infanticide.*

ANS. Polygamy was widely practised at the advent of Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.). A man could marry as many women as he liked or could afford. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, (S.A.W.) at the command of Almighty Allah, restricted the number to four. Thus the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) did not sanction polygamy but regulated it in a better way for the welfare of womenfolk. The translation of relevant verse of the Holy Qur'an in this regard is :

> *" And if ye fear that ye will not deal fairly by the orphans, marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four ; and if ye fear that ye cannot do justice (to so many) then one (only) or (the captives) that your right hands possess. Thus it is more likely that ye will not do injustice."* (4 : 3)
>
> The above verse hardly needs any further explanation.

ALLEGATION 10. *Rallying his followers to arms, Muhammad began to attack carvans on their way to Makkah. Medina became rich with the spoils of these raids and in* 629, *or AH* 8, *he took an army of some* 10,000 *men and conquered Makkah*

ANS. This is absolutely un-true. The fact is that the Qureish of Makkah were plotting to attack Muslims in the newly Islamic State of Madina and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) felt constrained to guard its frontiers by deputing a numbers of his followers to keep watc hover the movements of the Qureish of Makkah as well as their trade caravans. Circumstances took

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such a shape that because of the constant hostility of the Qureish of Makkah and their broken pledges, Makkah was subdued and peacefully conquered by the Holv Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) but after the conquest even the arch enemies of the Holy Prophe, Muhammad (S.A.W) were pardoned. It is hard to find an example of such benevolence and forgiveness in the history of the world.

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) is shown in the book having a veil on his face. Printing an imaginary picture of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) amounts to sacrilege and Muslims throughout history have not tolerated the printing of pictures of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).

In view of the above, it is highly objectionable that imaginary pictures of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) be printed in books and magazines.

MAZHERUDDIN SIDDIQI
AND
MR. MUHAMMAD SAMIULLAH.

RECOMMENDED READING

" DISTORTION ABOUT ISLAM IN THE WEST " published by Malik Sirajuddin & Sons, Kashmiri Bazar, Lahore (Pakistan). The book in question surveys all the western allegations against Islam and faithfully challenges their falsehood and absurdities in a rational and convincing manner.

THE TOPICS COVERED IN THIS BOOK ARE AS UNDER :

1. Nicknaming Islam in order to downgrade its universal character.
2. Is Qur'an not the Word of God ?
3. Al-Qur'an : The Glory of Ages.
4. Was Prophet Muhammad not a Genuine Prophet ?
5. Jesus in the Eyes of Islam.
6. Is God Unkind, Unapproachable and Inacessible in Islam ?
7. The Concept of Jehād in Islam.
8. Did Islam Spread with Sword ?
9. Status of Woman in Islam.
10. Marriage & Divorce in Islam.
11. Polygamy in Islam.
12. Rationale of Prophet Muhammad's Marriages.
13. Does Islam Permit Concubines ?
14. Insinuations Against Purdah.
15. Is Islamic Penal Code Degrading to Human Dignity ?
16. Islam and Slavery.
17. Is Islam Responsible for the Present day Backwardness of the Muslim World ?
18. Does Islam Meet the Challenges of Modern Times ?
19. Islam Versus Christianity (A rejoinder to " Time " Weekly).
20. Refutation of the False Accusation and Wild Allegation that Islam is Tolerant of Bribery and Corruption in Secular Affairs and is more concerned with Private than with Public Morality.

lease enhance your knowledge and commitment to Islam by reading this worthy book.

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